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ABSTRACT

The factors of people, technology, structure, and task provide a sociotechnical model for understanding the essential elements of schools as organizations. Schools can be understood as cultures and managed as such. Effective schools focus on a task-oriented organizational culture that meaningfully involves all participants in the key elements of the decision-making process. The specific elements through which organizational culture is preserved, expressed and conveyed are: (1) its history; (2) its symbolic myths and stories; (3) its espoused values and beliefs; (4) expectations for behavior; (5) rites and rituals which have symbolic value; and (6) heroes and heroines that symbolize the organization. These elements intersect and overlap to describe the organizational culture of a particular school. Quality education has been associated with factors that reflect small and rural schools, such as strong ties between community and schools, the presence of supportive interpersonal environments, and the development and nurturance of an academic climate that encourages organizational participants to achieve their individual potentials. The following strengths of rural and small schools may be conducive to establishing superior learning environments: (1) a lack of distinction between what belongs in school and what belongs in the community; (2) a kind of generalism which expects people to do whatever they are able without specialized roles or strictly age-graded functions; (3) close and supportive ties between families and the school; (4) a sense of comfort and cooperative spirit among the students; and (5) rural independence and self-reliance translated into the school setting. This paper contains 21 reference notes. (ALL)

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MANAGING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF RURAL SCHOOLS:

Creating Environments for Human Development

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MANAGING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF RURAL SCHOOLS:

Creating Environments for Human Development

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This paper presents a model for understanding and managing the forces which enhance the effectiveness of rural and small schools as educational organizations. We believe that effective schools should be managed so as to maximize the growth and development of the people in them: students and staff alike. The present unparalleled lack of confidence in American public education, in our judgment, can only be turned around by developing learning environments which stimulate human growth and development rather than limit it by insensitive and outdated bureaucratic structures.

The School as a Sociotechnical System--Schools exist for the purpose of providing children the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to assume their place in society. In our judgment the central administrative problem of schools is to manage them so that they become increasingly better places in which our children may live, learn, and grow. To achieve these goals the school system must accomplish specific tasks.[1] The school system must provide for buildings, staff, transportation, and a host of support services to achieve its mission. These tasks are organized within the framework of a structure that facilitates the accomplishment of organizational goals. The structure determines the way in which roles are organized, communication is carried out, tasks are accomplished, and decisions are made.

In order to achieve its goals an organization also relies on the use of technology. Technology may include physical inventions such as the computer,

TV, FAX, and program innovations such as modular scheduling, grouping strategies, and other procedural inventions which facilitate the accomplishment of the mission of the school.

Organizations are run by people. Through their organizational behavior people accomplish the goals of the organization. Individuals carry out their tasks within the context of a social system with quite distinct but often unstated values, beliefs and norms.

Thus, the four factors of people, technology, structure and task,[2] provide a model for understanding the essential elements of schools as organizations. It is by the creative management of these interactive subsystems that organizational change is accomplished. The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates these relationships.

It is obvious then that in order to change one element of an organization one must be prepared to change all aspects of the enterprise. If, for example, computer technology is to be introduced into the classroom, adjustments must be made to the nature of the expectations for teaching effectiveness (person), teacher-administrator performance (task) and the work flow process itself (structure). A fundamental law of nature is that you cannot change just one thing at a time.

Organizational Climate--No matter how it is configured, the socio-technical system described above is perceived by organizational participants in ways that influence their behavior. The term organizational climate has been used to describe these perceptions and has been defined in a number of ways over the years.

Halpin[3] described climate as organizationally analagous to human personality. In an attempt to provide an expanded definition of climate, Forehand

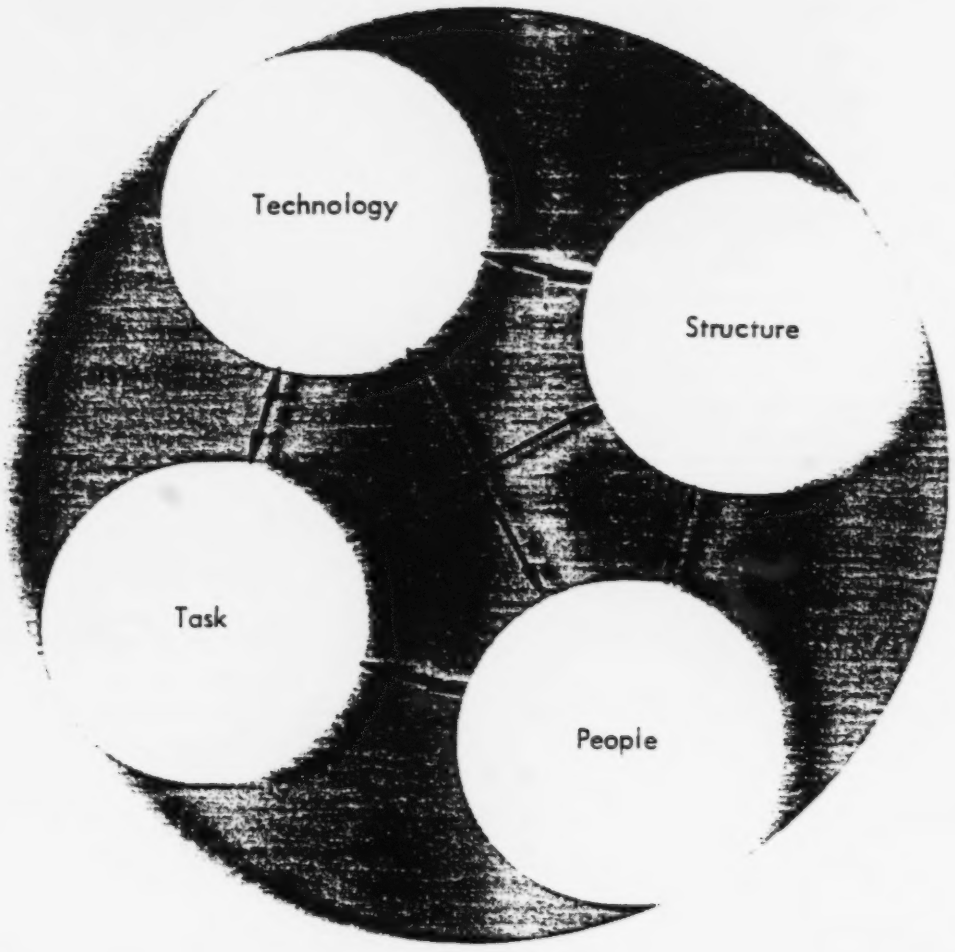

Figure 1
Interacting change variables in complex organization. Adapted from Harold J. Leavitt, "Applied Organizational Change in Industry: Structural, Technological and Humanistic Approaches," in James G. March, ed., *Handbook of Organizations* © 1965 by Rand McNally College Publishing Company, Chicago, Figure 1, p. 1145.

Source: Robert G. Owens and Carl R. Stienhoff, Administering Change in Schools. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

and Gilmer[4] described organizational climate as "the set of characteristics that (a) distinguish the organization from other organizations, (b) are relatively enduring over time, and (c) influence the behavior of people in the organization."

In 1968, Tagiuri extended the definition of climate so as to emphasize and include the full range of the perceptions of an organization's participants. He defined climate as follows: "Organizational climate is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of an organization that (a) is experienced by its members, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attributes) of the organization."[5] According to Tagiuri dimensions of climate include (a) ecology--the physical and material aspects of organizational environments, (b) milieu--the social characteristics of individuals and groups in the organization, (c) social system--the social dimension concerned with the patterned relationship of persons and groups, and (d) culture--the dimension concerned with beliefs, values, and meanings.

Tagiuri's taxonomy has provided a useful tool for examining the literature pertaining to organizational climate. Anderson[6] developed an interactive model showing all the possible relationships among Tagiuri's factors and their interactions with school climate (see Figure 2). Using this framework as a guide, she found that the majority of climate researchers studied the social system and culture dimensions and tended not to emphasize the dimensions of ecology and milieu.

In this paper we have elected to concentrate on these social and cultural dimensions, but we do not diminish the importance of the other factors in

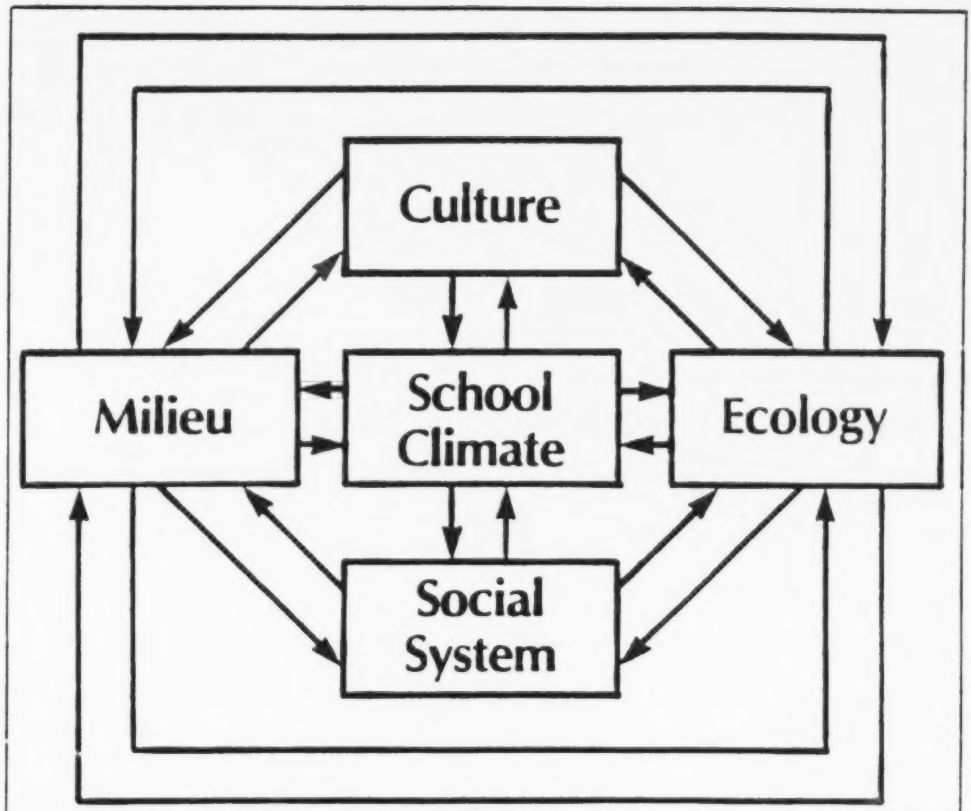

FIGURE 2. Interactive model showing all possible relationships among environmental dimensions and their interactions with school climate.

Source: Carolyn S. Anderson, "The Search for School Climate: A Review of the Research." Review of Educational Research, Fall 1982, Vol. 52, No. 3.

understanding the impact of climate on the behavior of organizational participants.

Organizational Culture--Organizational culture is "...a pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."[7] The study of patterns of these assumptions has focused on control mechanisms,[8] values, assumptions, and norms,[9] history, traditions, ceremonies, rituals, heroes, symbols, and informal networks,[10] as well as internalized solutions to internal and external problems.[11]

The literature on effective schools has tended to emphasize the importance of cultural characteristics such as social-cultural norms regarding collaborative problem solving, shared commitment to mutual values and goals, and social norms that reinforce intrinsic motivation.[7] Successful high schools have been described as having a strong sense of community and values that support the bonding between and among participants and between the participants and the school itself.[8]

Organizational structures that are flexible rather than rigid have been noted as being facilitative of an effective learning environment. Thus the administrative provision for a safe and orderly environment, clearly stated objectives, and high expectations for students are conditions precedent for effective learning to take place.

Clearly, then, effective schools are organizations whose processes are focused on a task-oriented organizational culture that meaningfully involves all organizational participants in the key elements of the decision making

process. We take the view that schools can be understood as cultures, and therefore must be managed as such. That is, we do not view culture as something that a school has but, rather, that culture is something an organization is.[15]

The specific elements through which the symbolism of organizational culture is preserved, expressed and conveyed are:

1. history of the organization;
2. symbolic myths and stories about the organization;
3. espoused values and beliefs of the organization;
4. expectations for behavior in the organization;
5. rites and rituals which have symbolic value in the organization;
6. heroes and heroines that symbolize the organization.

These elements intersect and overlap, as shown in Figure 3, to describe the organizational culture of a particular school. The description of these elements taken together by organizational participants may be expressed as the root metaphor of the organization.[16]

It is important then for administrators and teachers to become managers of their schools' organizational culture. Attempts to shape a school's culture cannot be limited to its more obvious public and visible manifestations. It is necessary for educators to stop and make public and explicit the hidden basic assumptions concerning the behavior, speech, artifacts, and technology in the organization in which they work.

It follows that administrators must manage the sociotechnical system (people, task, structure, and technology) so as to create organizational cultures that optimize opportunities for learning and personal development. These growth-enhancing cultures are characterized by:

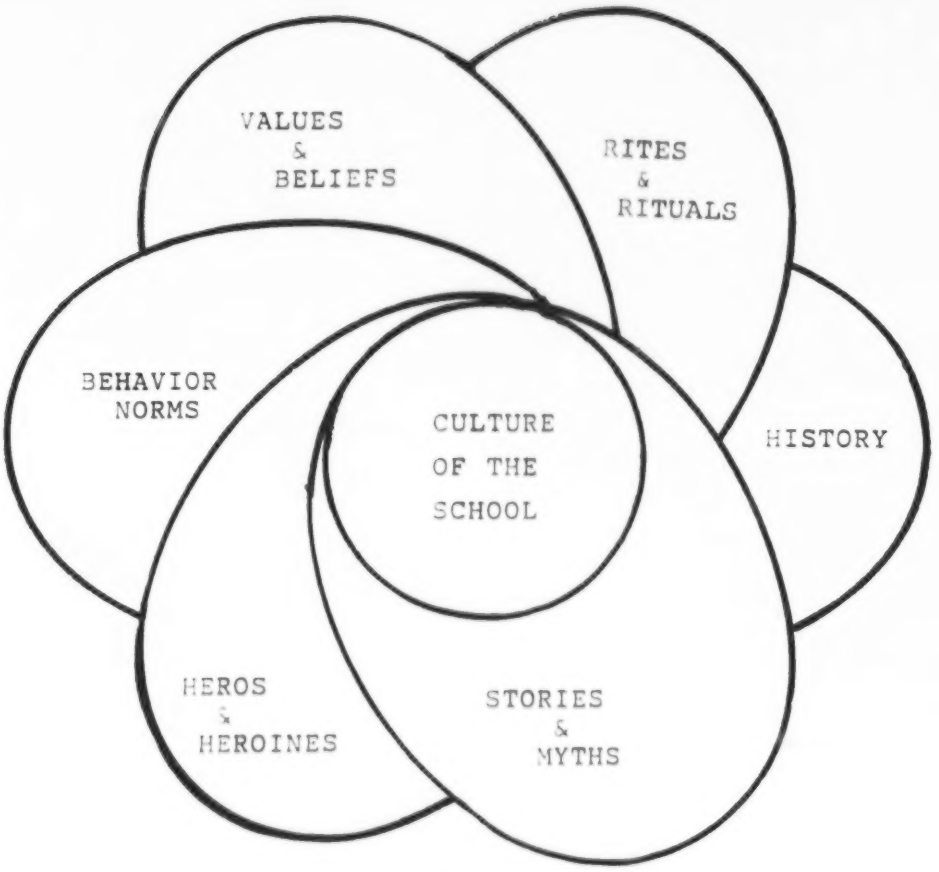

Fig. 3 Overlapping Symbolic Elements Describing the Culture of a School

SOURCE: Owens, Robert G. and Steinhoff, Carl R., "Toward a Theory of Organizational Culture." A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Session 43.36, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 8, 1988.

1. A normative environment that promotes intellectual stimulation and academic attainment. Recognition of the accomplishments of staff and students in all their manifestations must be an administrative priority;
2. A proactive administrative style that emphasizes participative decision making, collegiality, and instructional leadership; and
3. The maintenance of a "facilitating" organizational structure that provides safety, order, and purposefulness without harsh and rigid bureaucratic control.

The nature and quality of a school's organizational culture is often transmitted through the vehicle of metaphor. Successful school cultures are often described by teachers as a Broadway Show or a Ballet, with the principal characterized as a Maestro and Mentor. In such schools the teachers see themselves as artists and performers. On the opposite end of the scale some teachers have classified their schools as The Little Shop of Horrors where anything can get you--and it often does. The principal of such a school has been described by the staff as a Self-Cleaning Statue.[17]

There are a variety of structured, standardized instruments currently available to assess the qualitative nature of a school's environment and we have included a brief description of these measures. Table 1 presents the factor structure and typology of each instrument that measures some aspect of an organization's environment. Table 2 provides a descriptive comparison of the factors which characterize the end-points of each continuum. Factor definitions for the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire, Profile Of School Index, Pupil Control Index and Organizational Climate Index are listed in Appendix A.

TABLE 1

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE CO

AUTHOR	CLIMATE INVENTORY	CONCEPTS MEASURED
Likert	Profile of School	Leadership Processes Motivational Forces Communications Processes Decision-Making Processes Goal-Setting Processes Control Processes
Halpin	Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire	Intimacy Disengagement Esprit Hindrance - - - - - - - Thrust Consideration Aloofness Production Emphasis
Willower, et. al.	Pupil Control Index	Patterns of Social Control
Stern & Steinhoff	Organizational Climate Index	Intellectual Climate Achievement Standards Personal Dignity Task Effectiveness Orderliness Impulse Control

STRUCTS

TYPOLOGY

System			
1	2	3	4
Exploitive	Benevolent	Consultative	Participative

Closed - - - - - - -Open

Custodial - - - - - - - - Humanistic

Catabolic - - - - - - - -Anabolic

Rensis LIKERT. The Human Organization: Its Management and Value. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

Andrew HALPIN and Don Croft. The Organizational Climate of Schools. (Chicago: Midwest Admin. Center, Univ. Of Chicago, 1963).

Donald WILLOWER, et. al. The School and Pupil Control Ideology. (Univ. Park, PA: Penn State Studies, Monograph # 24, 1967).

Carl STEINHOFF. "Organizational Climate in a Public School System." Final Report. USOE contract No. OE-4-10-225 (Proj. S-083), 1965.

TABLE 2

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS BY TYPOLOGY

Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire:

Closed	Open
Low Esprit	High Esprit
High Disengagement	Low Disengagement
Low Consideration	High Consideration
Low Thrust	High Thrust

Profile of a School:

System 1	System 4
Authoritarian Leadership	Participative & Supportive Leadership
Poor Motivation	High Motivation
Weak Communication	Strong Communication
Weak Interaction	Warm and Close Interaction
Unilateral Decision-Making and Goal Setting	Shared Goal Setting & Decision-Making Processes
Hierarchical Control Processes	Collegial Control Processes
Weak Performance Goals	High Performance Goals

Organizational Climate Index:

Catabolic	Anabolic
Low Intellectual Climate	High Intellectual Climate
Low Achievement Standards	High Achievement Standards
Low Personal Dignity	High Personal Dignity
Low Organizational Effectiveness	High Organizational Effectiveness
High Orderliness	Moderate Orderliness
High Impulse Control	High Impulse Expression

Pupil Control Ideology:

Custodial	Humanistic
Concern with maintenance of order	Learning viewed as cooperative enterprise
Students stereotyped	Internal controls stressed
Rigid pupil-teacher status hierarchy	Dignity of student & satisfaction of human needs stressed
Flow of power unilateral and downward	Open channels of communication between teachers & students stressed
Theory X orientation regarding pupil motivation	Theory Y orientation

While each conceptual system presents its own unique view of the organization of learning environments, the similarities of the end-points are striking. A number of new research findings support the effectiveness of Open, Anabolic, System 4, and Humanistic school environments in promoting student achievement and organizational effectiveness.[18]

Crucial Factors in Organizational Change--There are a variety of ways to identify and classify strategies of organizational change. Chin and Bennis developed a three-part typology into which they grouped various change tactics according to the fundamental assumptions upon which they are based. They labeled the three types as follows: (1) empirical-rational strategies, (2) normative-reeducative strategies, and (3) power-coercive strategies.[19]

Empirical-rational strategies are predicated upon the assumption that people are rational and, therefore, when some new or better way of doing things is discovered it will be adopted. A typical tactic associated with this strategy is research, development, and diffusion (R, D, & D).

The normative-reeducative strategy of change is based on the notion that an organization is a social system and that institutional norms shape the behavior of those who work in it. That is, if the norms and values of the social system have a causive relationship to an individual's organizational behavior, then change must involv reeducation which leads to the adoption of new, more adaptive, and functional norms. A typical tactic associated with this strategy is Organizational Development problem solving activities.

The power-coercive general strategy for change relies upon the use of sanctions--actual or potential--to achieve its aims. Change is achieved through the use of power. A typical power-coercive tactic involves the use of political power.

Administering Change in Schools--As we have pointed out there are four key organizational subsystems that, taken together, are fundamental to the administration of change in schools. These subsystems are interrelated in such a way that attempts to make significant changes in one will induce complimentary changes in the other. The correlation of organizational forces these subsystems represent are perceived by organizational participants both consciously and unconsciously. This physical, individual, social, and psychological matrix of social norms, values, and traditions, history, rituals, and significant personages are referred to collectively as organizational culture.

We have shown that there are a number of change strategies, with attendant tactics, that may be selectively utilized to alter the subsystems of people, task, structure, and technology. These changes ultimately lead to a change in the normative climate of the organization. A model which provides a conceptual basis for the systematic planning and management of the change process is presented in Figure 4.

Managing Organizational Culture in Rural Schools--Creating a developmental organizational culture for the ten million students in rural and small schools poses many difficult problems, not the least of which is defining the concept of "rural" itself. Rural education has been defined in both qualitative and quantitative terms.[20]

Dunne[21] has stated that rural education is defined by traditional rural strengths. They are:

1. A lack of distinction between what "belongs" in school and what "belongs" in the community;

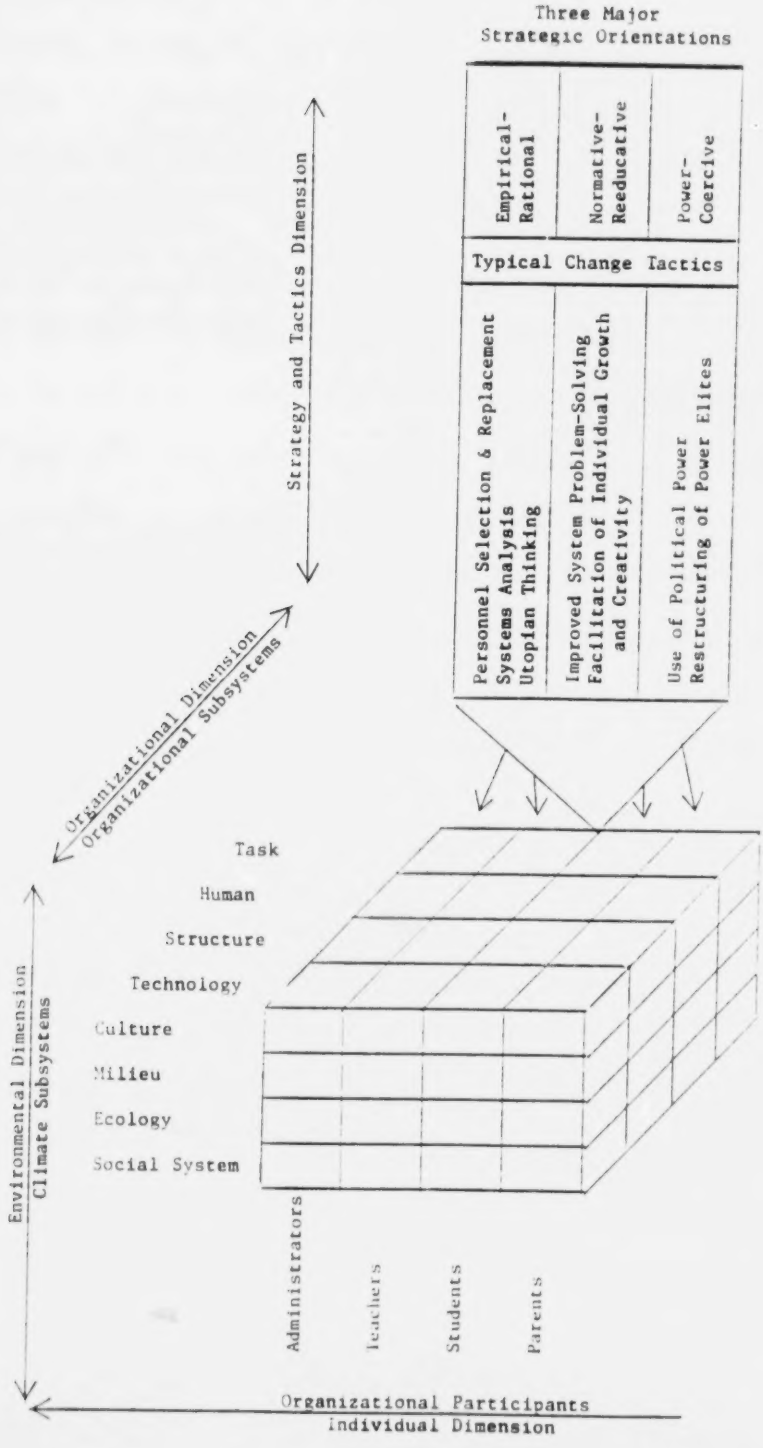

Fig. 4 A Framework for Administering Change in Schools

2. A kind of generalism which expects people to do whatever they are able without specialized roles or strictly age-graded functions;
3. Close and supportive ties between families and the school;
4. A sense of comfort and cooperative spirit among the school children; and
5. Rural independence and self-reliance translated into the school setting.

This strong normative environment may have positive or negative consequences. The nature of community involvement is such that it may spawn insularity because of in-breeding and therefore limit emphasis on intellectual and academic achievement.

Conversely, quality education has been associated with strong ties between community and schools, the presence of supportive interpersonal environments, and the development and nurturance of an academic climate that encourages each organizational participant to achieve his/her potential. Thus the very nature of rural and small schools may be conducive to establishing superior learning environments.

The model presented in Figure 4 is a generic one. One brief example of how it might be utilized in rural schools is presented for illustrative purposes.

The first step in creating an environment for human development would be to conceive of it in metaphorical terms. One could raise questions about the values and norms that would characterize such a school. What, for example, are the expectations for the roles of teachers, administrators, and students in an intellectually stimulating and achievement-oriented environment?

The literature cited has given some clues to just what such a learning environment would look like, but it is not our role nor indeed our desire to be prescriptive in this matter. It is, rather, our intent to show that the metaphor one does intend to adopt achieves reality through the judicious engineering of the organizational subsystems described in our model. The techniques for modifying these subsystems are well known and their validity and effectiveness are a matter of record. It is in our hands to determine whether or not our children are educated in the Starship Enterprise or The Little Shop of Horrors.

Notes

1. The following discussion is adapted from R.G. Owens and C.R. Steinhoff, Administering Change in Schools. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), pp. 60-63.

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15. L. Smiricich. "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis," Administrative Science Quarterly, 28 (1983), p. 347.

16. L. Smiricich. "Concepts of Culture," p. 347.

17. C.R. Steinhoff and R.G. Owens. The Organizational Culture Assessment Inventory: A Metaphorical Analysis of Organizational Culture in Educational Settings. A paper presented at Division A of the American Educational Research Association 1988 Annual Meeting.

18. For a discussion of the sociological characteristics of effective learning environments see J. Stockard and M. Mayberry, Learning Environments: A Review of the Literature on School Environments and Student Achievement. (Eugene: Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon, 1985).

19. R. Chin and K.D. Benne. "General Stratregies for Effective Change in Human Systems," in W.G. Bennis, K.D. Benne, and R. Chin, eds., The Planning of Change, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969).

20. B.R.D. Rios. "Rural"--A Concept Beyond Definition? (Las Cruces: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Report No. ERO-RC-88-09, 1988).

21. F. Dunne. "Is There Such a Thing as Rural Education? A Portrait of the Small Rural School," The Small School Forum, 2 (1981) pp. 2-4.

APPENDIX A

Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire Subtests

Teacher Behavior

1. Disengagement - the tendency to be going though the motions
2. Hindrance - the feeling of being burdened with routine duties and paperwork
3. Esprit - the feeling or morale or teamwork
4. Intimacy - social-needs satisfaction

Principal Behavior

5. Aloftness - perceived social distance and impersonality
6. Production Emphasis - the extent to which the principal emphasizes close supervision
7. Thrust - refers to the principal's efforts to move the organization through hard work
8. Consideration - measure of the principal's tendency to deal with teachers in human terms

Profile of Organization (School) Subtests

Organizational Characteristics

1. Leadership Processes - the extent to which superiors display supportive behavior toward others
2. Motivational Forces - the manner in which motives are utilized to gain organizational objectives
3. Communication Process - the amount of interaction and communication aimed at achieving organization's objectives
4. Interaction-Influence Process - the amount of teamwork present in the organization
5. Decision-Making Process - the level at which decisions are made in the organization
6. Goal Setting - the process used in goal setting; e.g. level of group participation
7. Control Process - the level at which primary responsibility exists for the exercise of control
8. Performance Goals and Training - the level of performance goals that superiors seek to have the organization achieve

Organizational Climate Index Factor Definitions

Intellectual Climate - Schools with high scores on this factor have environments that are perceived as being conductive to scholarly interests in the humanities, arts, and sciences. Staff and physical plant are seen to be facilitative of these interests and the general work atmosphere is characterized by intellectual activities and pursuits.

Achievement Standards - Environments with high scores on this factor are perceived to stress high standards of personal achievement. Tasks are successfully completed and high levels of motivation and energy are maintained. Recognition is given for work of good quality and quantity and the staff is expected to achieve at the highest levels.

Personal Dignity - Organizational climates scoring high on this factor respect the integrity of the individual and provide a supportive environment. There is a sense of fair play and openness in the working environment.

Organizational Effectiveness - Schools with high scores on this factor have work environments that encourage and facilitate the effective performance of tasks. Work programs are planned and well organized, and people work together effectively to meet organizational objectives.

Orderliness - High scores on this factor are indicative of a press for organizational structure and procedural orderliness. Neatness counts and there are pressures to conform to a defined norm of personal appearance and institutional image. There are set procedures and teachers are expected to follow them.

Impulse Control - High scores on this factor imply a great deal of constraint and organizational restrictiveness in the work environment. There is little opportunity for personal expression or for any form of impulsive behavior.